



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8

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Ref: EPR-SR

JAN 14 2011

Mr. Guy Davidson
455 Reserve Rd.
Libby, MT 59923

Subject: Quality of Soils used in the Residential Cleanup at the Libby Asbestos Superfund Site (Correspondence # AX-10-002-0770)

Dear Mr. Davidson:

This letter is in response to your e-mail to Barack Obama, President of the United States, concerning the quality of topsoil being used for backfill for the residential cleanup at the Libby Asbestos Superfund Site. The following is a summary of the actions taken and planned to address this problem.

Prior to delivering backfill topsoil to residential properties, the topsoil is tested for Libby Amphibole asbestos, select agronomy parameters, and organic and inorganic pollutants. The purpose of the tests is to ensure that topsoil used for restoration is contaminant free and suitable as a growth media for gardens, flowerbeds, and yards. The results of the tests are compared to project-specific criteria. If they meet the criteria, the topsoil source stockpiles are approved for use.

In 2010, EPA received approximately 40 calls from homeowners whose properties had been cleaned up in 2009 and 2010 concerning topsoil quality and the unsuccessful establishment of lawns. Each of these calls was logged into our hotline tracking program to assure that each complaint would be addressed on an individual basis. In addition, EPA initiated an evaluation of this problem on a project-wide basis. During the evaluation, observations of the vegetative cover and homeowner maintenance, as well as soil pH measurements were recorded. This evaluation found the following:

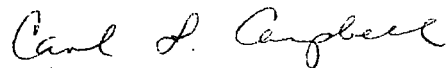
1. For some properties, it was found that the lawn seeds did not germinate properly. In those cases, the property was seeded a second time which resolved the problem.
2. Some properties were found to have a soil pH greater than 8.0, which is greater than project specification. EPA will continue to track these properties in 2011. If vegetation falls to be satisfactorily established at these properties, EPA will implement actions to improve conditions. This may include additional seeding, fertilizer, or soil amendments.
3. No abnormalities were identified at some properties. For these properties, additional

homeowner maintenance and/or application of fertilizer resulted in successful establishment of the lawns.

Furthermore, EPA is re-evaluating the topsoil specifications used for this project for 2011. The goal of this re-evaluation is to improve the overall replacement topsoil quality and reduce the number of complaints received regarding topsoil quality.

If you have any further questions regarding this response, please contact Victor Ketellapper, Team Leader for the Libby Asbestos Superfund Site. Victor can be reached by phone at 303-312-6578 or by email at ketellapper.victor@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Carol L. Cambell
Assistant Regional Administrator
Office of Ecosystem Protection
and Remediation

